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Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez ..... (Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/71/38 (Supp), A/71/219, A/71/223, A/71/209, A/71/306 and A/71/398)

1. **Ms. del Águila Castillo** (Guatemala) said that International Day of the Girl Child was a timely moment to reflect on the progress made to date and the challenges that lay ahead. The achievement of gender equality in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 would require an explicit focus on the collection and analysis of data, disaggregated by sex and by age. Equal access to formal education, as set out in Goal 3, would open up opportunities for work outside the agricultural sector and for holding public office. While the proportion of women employed in non-agricultural sectors in Guatemala had risen slightly, family responsibilities such as childcare and housework often prevented women from joining the economically active population. Other challenges included raising the profile of unpaid work and establishing a system that effectively protected women's rights and provided adequate social security coverage.

2. Guatemala had adopted a number of laws and policies aimed at fulfilling its commitments under international instruments. They included a law which provided that searches for women reported to have disappeared should be initiated immediately in an effort to prevent them from coming to further harm. The 2014-2024 public policy on combating human trafficking and ensuring comprehensive victim protection aimed to improve institutional coordination in those matters, while a decree had established a minimum age of 18 years for marriage for both sexes.

3. **Ms. Maduhu** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the world would not be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if half of its population was held back. Her Government was therefore strongly committed to mainstreaming gender equality and gender-based violence objectives in all policies and programmes, including in national growth and poverty reduction strategies. It had amended the Constitution, revisited discriminatory provisions and enacted new laws with the aim of eliminating violence against women. Legal literacy campaigns, gender focal points in workplaces and police stations and campaigns against sexual and gender-based violence had also been introduced countrywide.

4. Despite the progress in Tanzanian health care and maternal health indicators, most women in rural areas still gave birth at home without a skilled attendant present and with no access to emergency obstetric care. An estimated 8,000 women died each year due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth and, for each death during childbirth, 20 women developed an injury, infection or life-changing disability. A Government programme providing disadvantaged women with free fistula surgery had alleviated the problem and surgeries under the programme now accounted for one third of all fistula surgeries. The programme also ensured training for hundreds of community health workers, outreach missions to raise awareness about fistula in rural areas and the dissemination of public service announcements about fistula on local radio and television stations. The upfront transportation costs of poor fistula patients continued to be paid for by the M-PESA money transfer microfinancing service.

5. Her delegation urged international partners to step up efforts and funding to promote basic rights to health and life.

6. **Ms. Dagher** (Lebanon) said that discrimination and violence against women and girls continued unabated in several parts of the world, impeding the realization of other fundamental rights. The advancement of women and girls and their protection from violence and discrimination was not only a human right, but a precondition of sustainable development and of the establishment of just and peaceful societies.

7. Lebanon had enshrined in its Constitution the guarantee of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all citizens should be equal before the law. On the basis of that provision, the Government worked closely with civil society, the private sector and regional and international actors to advance women's rights. Those efforts had recently borne fruit with the adoption of the Domestic Violence Act. The Government had also collaborated with regional and international partners to combat human trafficking, mainly of women and girls, and enhance protection of migrant workers from all forms of violence. In collaboration with civil society and the private sector,

economic and financial incentives had been introduced to help women entrepreneurs and encourage women to join the workplace. In politics, municipal elections over the summer of 2016 had seen record numbers of women voters and candidates.

8. The main challenge facing Lebanon was the presence of more than 1.5 million Syrian and Palestinian refugees, over 70 per cent of whom were women and children. With its infrastructure and public services overstretched, Lebanon was unable to handle a humanitarian crisis of that scale on its own and requested Member States to commit to sharing the burden and the responsibility.

9. **Ms. Jónsdóttir** (Iceland) said that, although her country had topped the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index for a seventh successive year, the fight for gender equality was far from over.

10. She drew attention to new methods for tackling domestic violence in her country, including the removal of perpetrators from homes, restraining orders and better support and protection for victims. On the basis of projects piloted in the United States of America and Jordan, a coordinated service and consultation centre had been set up to cater for individuals subjected to violence or prostitution in a single location.

11. In line with the country's commitment to engage men and boys in the fight for gender equality and address the underlying factors of violence, the Prime Minister of Iceland had taken part in the HeForShe campaign. The country was also involved in the Barbershop initiative, a series of international conferences focusing on involving men in leadership positions in the discussion of gender equality.

12. After almost a decade of preparation, the finishing touches were being put to the equal pay standard, an initiative under which all men and women working for companies and institutions implementing the standard received equal pay. Seven or eight employers from a pilot project, including government offices, private companies and one union, were due to receive certification demonstrating that their employees were paid equally. The equal pay standard had been developed in line with International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards to be adaptable to any country. Iceland hoped to be the first country in the world to have equal pay for all and she encouraged other Member States to join the initiative.

13. **Ms. Gueye** (Senegal) said that despite the best efforts of the international community to stamp out violence against women and girls, considerable challenges remained. Senegal had tried to put an end to the practice of excision, combat gender-based violence, promote gender equity and equality and increase women's involvement in efforts to promote peace.

14. Her Government had revised the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure to guarantee women and girls protection from all forms of violence. In 2015, programmes to boost economic and social capacity and development had freed up funds for 194 small and medium-sized youth enterprises, 80 per cent of whose members were women, and 355 projects centred on women. The two programmes had also served to generate revenue and job opportunities through activities in local development, production, trade in agriculture products, forestry, husbandry and fishing.

15. In the area of health care, a social protection policy had been adopted to improve the living conditions of vulnerable groups and a major campaign had been launched in 2015 to eradicate obstetrical fistula in various regions of the country. Treatment centres for victims of fistula had been set up to assist women with rehabilitation into society specifically in southern regions where they were sometimes marginalized and impoverished.

16. **Ms. Nunoshiba** (Japan) said that her country had been enhancing international cooperation and development assistance, with a view to building a society in which women could truly shine. In 2015, it had set aside $350 million in official development assistance over three years for education, with an emphasis on gender sensitivity and the empowerment of women and girls. In May 2016, it had introduced its Development Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. At the Group of Seven summit in Ise Shima in 2016, Japan had announced a global human resources development initiative for some 5,000 female government officials over three years and improved educational opportunities for over 50,000 girls. Every year since 2014, it had invited the world's top women leaders and other relevant

stakeholders to the World Assembly for Women to discuss women's empowerment.

17. In the current global context of ongoing conflicts and record numbers of refugees, migrants and displaced persons, the international community should emphasize the interconnection between women, peace and security. In that vein, Japan had been implementing an action plan on women, peace and security and had helped to organize the Asia-Pacific Regional Symposium on National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security in July 2016.

18. **Mr. Panayotov** (Bulgaria) said that his country had a long history of promoting gender equality and that over the previous 25 years the role of Bulgarian women in political life had steadily increased. Several important offices, including that of President of the National Assembly and Mayor of Sofia, were currently held by women. Two thirds of magistrates in national courts were women, as were one third of judges in the Constitutional Court and the prevailing majority of civil servants in the central and local administrations.

19. The Government regularly updated national legislation to incorporate a gender perspective and had passed a new law on gender equality in early 2016. In accordance with its accession to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Bulgaria was committed to developing policies in that area. The Government was also amending the National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality to strengthen provisions on equal treatment, equal access to resources and equal participation in decision-making. A range of measures, including flexible working hours, opportunities for combining career and family life, promotion of the role of the father in the family, protective measures for working women and the promotion of entrepreneurship for women had been designed to provide women and men equal access to professional training and to the labour market and equal pay for work of equal value.

20. Bulgaria fully supported the concept of Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and was committed to contributing to global efforts to achieve full gender equality within the next 15 years.

21. **Mr. Muhamedjanov** (Tajikistan) said that his Government had made equal rights and opportunities for women a priority since independence. It had developed and strengthened national laws, mechanisms, strategies and programmes to improve the status of women and expand the opportunities available to them. The Committee on Women and the Family helped to improve gender legislation and coordinate activities between the Government and civil society.

22. Tajikistan had implemented programmes to improve women's status, provide legal protection to the family, mothers and children and create an enabling environment for the employment of women and their involvement in governance. Incorporating the gender perspective into national economic and social strategies and plans had also attracted more attention to women's issues.

23. One aim of the recent high-level symposium on Sustainable Development Goal 6 in Dushanbe was to increase women's participation in water-related programmes. A priority issue at the symposium had been to ensure that sustainable development was human-focused by establishing linkages between Goals 5 and 6. Achievement of those Goals would, however, require greater funding and commitments by the international community. The sixty-first session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women would provide a further timely opportunity to discuss ways in which to involve women in the implementation of Goal 5. As a member of the Commission, Tajikistan was keen to cooperate with Member States and international and regional organizations to increase women's involvement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

24. **Mr. Brown** (Liberia) said that gender equality and women's empowerment could be realized only once all facets of discrimination had been eliminated and a propitious environment in which women could thrive had been created. The fact that the country's gender inequality could now be measured was a step forward, but much remained to be done to address the persistent lack of access to justice, violence and cultural restrictions faced by women.

25. With a view to meeting its obligations with regard to Sustainable Development Goal 5 and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Liberia was currently localizing its Sustainable Development Goals, decentralizing governance, implementing Ebola

recovery plans and drawing down the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The recent adoption of the Equal Representation and Participation Act, which provided for additional seats for women in parliament, and the Domestic Violence Act, as well as the Government's endorsement of the HeForShe campaign, demonstrated the country's commitment to enhancing women's political and economic empowerment and to inclusivity.

26. Mindful of the importance of cooperation, his Government was grateful to the development partners of Liberia, including UN-Women, for their programmes supporting women and girls. At such a critical moment, leading up to the presidential elections and the UNMIL drawdown, women should be encouraged to vote, partake in decision-making and to play no less of a role in ensuring peaceful and fair elections than they had played in obtaining peace.

27. **Mr. Njie** (Gambia) said that despite overwhelming consensus that women were the pillars of society and the backbone of economies, particularly agrarian economies, they still suffered from marginalization and discrimination. The main obstacle to women's empowerment was the deep-seated belief that women were weak and secondary in importance, and the only way to eliminate such discrimination was through enlightened leadership that demonstrated trust in women. The Gambia had therefore made gender parity a priority through affirmative action policies. Women held important and strategic portfolios in the cabinet, and the vice president was also a woman. Eight out of eleven jurists at the high court were women, and the deputy speaker of the National Assembly was a woman, in a deliberate effort to bring equilibrium to the three arms of government and ensure that women were well represented.

28. Violence was a factor impeding women's empowerment, particularly traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. General Assembly resolution 69/150 had reaffirmed that female genital mutilation was a harmful practice and a form of violence. Gambia agreed that there was an urgent need to eradicate the practice, and thus it had banned and criminalized female genital mutilation and made it punishable by heavy fines and imprisonment.

29. Countries should encourage legislation to provide a legal framework for gender equality and undertake reviews of their national laws in order to align them with international conventions and to eradicate gender-based discrimination. Women could also be empowered through enhanced investment in agriculture and the informal economic sectors. Other measures that should be implemented were reforms to encourage women's ownership of land, increases in microfinancing and other credit facilities and improved education for women.

30. **Mr. Komara** (Guinea) said that the advancement of women had taken on a new prominence since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the signing of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Nevertheless, women were still victims of violence, exploitation, sexual abuse and institutional and cultural discrimination. Women bore the brunt of the numerous political and economic crises taking place around the world, particularly in Africa. Guinea was among those States that recognized and defended the role of women in bringing about peace and prosperity worldwide.

31. The fight against the Ebola virus in Guinea was an historic opportunity to witness women's capacity to transform the world. The country had initiated a post-Ebola recovery and resilience fund that gave priority to development projects for girls and women, and had strengthened public-private partnership to increase financing for projects in rural areas to increase food security. Other important initiatives included the design of 30 women-centred financing projects by the Commission of the African Union, the creation with the United Nations of multidimensional empowerment platforms for women in Upper Guinea and support for women and girl victims of Ebola.

32. The Government of Guinea had promoted an educational system that respected gender equality at all levels. It had trained girls in new information and communications technology and had supported literacy programmes. Women's health, particularly maternal health, was also important for the promotion and empowerment of women and for this reason, Guinea provided caesarean sections free of charge and efforts were being made to prevent and treat obstetric fistulas.

33. **Ms. Khan** (Pakistan) said that armed conflict and illegal occupation exacerbated the plight of women. Three quarters of the Syrian refugee population was composed of women and children, and in Indian-occupied Kashmir thousands of women had fallen

victim to oppression and occupation, with countless others suffering rape and sexual abuse. However, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) had taken a new approach and had chosen not to view women merely as victims of conflict, but rather had recognized that women could play a key role in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding.

34. Pakistan remained committed to the advancement of women's rights and to that end, had just passed comprehensive legislation on offences relating to rape and offences in the name of, or on the pretext of, honour. By strengthening existing legal frameworks, including the imposition of life sentences for any act of honour killing, that legislation was a firm and unequivocal message that there was no honour in honour killing. The Government would take all necessary measures to ensure that it was implemented.

35. Pakistan's development-oriented economic action plan for the long-term took full account of gender issues. It focused on ending discrimination against women and on creating an environment that would allow women to develop their full potential and share the benefits of economic growth, prosperity, and social development.

36. **Ms. Oh** Youngju (Republic of Korea) said that women's economic empowerment, which was a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals, contributed to the building of stronger and more inclusive economies. In that regard, the creation of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment was a welcome development. Her Government had strived to break systemic constraints against women's economic empowerment that were the result of social norms and insufficient legal protection, and was also building partnerships with civil society organizations and businesses to provide female workers with fair opportunities.

37. Women and girls around the world were often deprived of access to basic education, health care and proper nutrition and still faced political, economic and cultural restraints. To address that problem, in 2015 the Government of the Republic of Korea had launched an initiative called "Better Life for Girls", which supported girls' education, health and professional development in developing countries. Under that initiative, it would provide $200 million over five years for relevant projects.

38. Women's participation in the decision-making process was also crucial to women's empowerment and the elimination of the structural causes of gender discrimination, as such participation would ensure that women's needs were reflected in relevant policy decisions. The Republic of Korea had strengthened legal and institutional frameworks by revising the Framework Act on Gender Equality and by increasing the number of gender-related programmes and projects. Those efforts had led to a continued increase in the proportion of women in government committees, public institution management and academic circles over previous years.

39. **Ms. Sabja** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that, since the enactment of a new Constitution in 2009 containing provisions on gender equality, the political participation of women in her country had dramatically increased from 19 per cent in 2004 to 43 per cent. Bolivia was currently ranked second in the world for the number of women involved in politics.

40. Access to education had also improved markedly. Although primary and secondary school completion rates were similar for girls and boys, the gulf between rural and indigenous pupils was wide, despite the fact that free and universal health and educational services were available to all Bolivians. Rural literacy rates, on the other hand, had reached 98.5 per cent in 2011.

41. Tackling the unjust and unequal relations that were detrimental to women would require the consideration and questioning of global power structures and a deconstruction of the patriarchal world order that supported women's subordination. Only then would it be possible to build a new order without poverty, hunger and war, where priority would be given to people rather than capital and the environment would be protected.

42. Her Government was working to eliminate violence and discrimination against women and girls, promote gender equality in decision-making, ensure women and girls' reproductive and sexual rights and bring about the just distribution of resources, land and opportunities for training. By nationalizing her country's natural resources, it had been able to increase the public budget tenfold and cut extreme poverty by 20 percentage points. It had done so with the active participation of women. For example, 30 per cent of Government ministers were women.

43. **Mr. Haycen** (Mauritania) said that, aware of the marginalization and discrimination faced by women and the efforts of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to achieve gender equality and women's advancement, Mauritania had ratified a number of international instruments concerning women and girls, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Government had mainstreamed a gender approach in all its national policies and programmes and had adopted the principle of affirmative action in favour of women, a policy that had led to significant improvements for its women, particularly women with disabilities and rural women.

44. Mauritania had made progress in the legal, political and economic spheres with respect to women's empowerment. In the legal sphere, the Government had recently enacted a law to criminalize a number of forms of violence against women, and had adopted a retirement age of 60 for both men and women. The Personal Status Code was also being revised so that it would better align with societal changes. In the political sphere, women were represented in the legislature, and in the most recent legislative elections women had won 21 per cent of parliamentary seats. Women also held a number of ministerial portfolios and headed a number of domestic agencies and diplomatic missions. In the economic sphere, there had been some success in fighting unemployment among women. There had also been a focus on providing bank financing and loans to women for income-generating activities.

45. **Ms. Vilde** (Latvia) said that gender equality was an essential part of domestic and foreign policies in Latvia. Women were politically and economically active, highly educated and well represented in the fields of business, science and the law. Civil society participation was guaranteed at all levels of policymaking, and in terms of gender equality Latvia consistently ranked among the top 20 countries globally. Latvia had the second-highest proportion of women in senior business positions in the European Union.

46. However, much remained to be done, and the domestic focus was mainly on women's economic empowerment and the elimination of violence against women. Latvia was continuing to improve its legal framework and to undertake new international commitments. In May 2016, it had signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and since 2015 the State had been funding social rehabilitation services for adult victims of violence. Expert training and awareness campaigns concerning domestic violence issues had been ongoing, including efforts to encourage victims to report violence, as were efforts to combat human trafficking. In the area of economic empowerment, Latvia was working to improve its tax system so that it better addressed income inequality and had introduced flexible childcare arrangements for working parents in order to help them achieve a better balance between work and family life. Latvia had also promoted women's participation in science, technology and digital fields.

47. **Ms. Izzeldin** (Sudan) said that the Sudan's pioneering position in the area of women's political participation was corroborated by statistics, with 66 per cent of civil service positions and 30 per cent of parliamentary seats held by women. Women were also represented in the armed forces and the police, and had assumed positions in the judiciary, the diplomatic corps and the private sector. In its efforts to empower women, the Government of the Sudan had set a number of strategies and policies, including a national strategy to combat violence against women.

48. In an effort to empower women, the Government had created a policy that focused on six fundamental areas, namely health, the environment, education, economic development, decision-making and peacebuilding. In addition, a number of administrative departments on women's affairs had been established and gender mainstreaming had been incorporated at all government divisions and ministries. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Security had started a project for rural women all over Sudan but with a particular focus on Darfur, for the purpose of funding women's microenterprises.

49. In 2005, the Sudan had also devised a strategy to combat gender-based violence and had created a unit to combat violence against women and girls. A community policing unit had also been established at the Ministry of the Interior to protect the family and children, and the Advisory Council for Human Rights,

in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Mission in Sudan, had paid special attention to raising awareness around violence against women in the Darfur states. In addition to those measures, in 2008 the State had adopted a strategy to fight female circumcision.

50. **Ms. Jakubone** (Lithuania) said that violence against women was a grave human rights violation, a form of discrimination, and also a serious drain on economic resources. Tangible tools for prevention of violence against women had been discussed at the most recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women. At the national level, Lithuania was committed to implementing its national programme and action plan for the prevention of domestic violence, with the ultimate goal of improving assistance to victims and establishing a zero-tolerance policy towards domestic violence. In addition, the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence against Women had been in effect for over four years.

51. The Lithuanian National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was based on a gender mainstreaming approach and was closely related to the Sustainable Development Goals. Its main priorities were to promote equal opportunities for men and women in employment, to promote gender balance in decision-making, to promote gender mainstreaming and to strengthen institutional mechanisms. In September 2016 Lithuania had adopted a new Labour Code that recognized the principle of respect for employees' family commitments and work-life balance. The Code also contemplated the possibility of parents working part-time or remotely.

52. **Ms. Abushawesh** (State of Palestine) said that the situation in the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, had worsened further since 2015, with detrimental effects on Palestinian women and their families at many different levels. Israel had used home demolitions as a means of collective punishment against the occupied Palestinian population. Humanitarian shelters, schools and agricultural fields had also been destroyed with little or no notice. On a recent visit to Palestine, the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences had witnessed the severe psychological impact that losing one's home had on women, depriving them of family memorabilia and shattering their hopes of a safe and secure future.

53. The Israeli military occupation remained the major obstacle to the equality, advancement and full empowerment of Palestinian women. The prolonged occupation had taken its toll on women, who struggled to ensure the protection and well-being of their families while dealing with the other gender issues faced by other women worldwide.

54. She called on the international community to address the unjust and unsustainable situation in accordance with obligations and responsibilities under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. The United Nations must exert more efforts to compel Israel to end its fifty-year-old brutal military occupation and hold that occupying Power accountable for its violations and crimes committed against Palestinian women and their families and provide them with international protection until the termination of occupation and the realization of the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

55. **Ms. Byaje** (Rwanda) said that her country had made tremendous strides towards gender equality and women's empowerment despite high unemployment, limited financial literacy and the general perception that women were not fit to become public leaders. During the 1994 genocide, which had claimed more than a million lives, more than a quarter of a million women had been raped, abused and left scarred for life, but women had also been among the perpetrators and were serving jail terms for their involvement in mass atrocities and, more recently, in acts of terrorism and genocide denial.

56. A number of national gender machineries had been put in place to develop and implement laws and policies on women. Comprehensive legal reforms that addressed women's empowerment had been adopted. The new Constitution provided for equal inheritance and succession rights for men and women. Other new legislation sought to prevent and punish gender-based violence and to guarantee women and men equal rights to access their own land. Rwanda had ratified a number of international treaties and protocols relating to women, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People's

Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Kigali Declaration, adopted at the Kigali International Conference on the Role of Security Organs in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

57. Awareness of the importance of gender equality to sustainable development could enhance development planning. Strong gender institutions were critical and greater cooperation was needed to generate and manage gender-disaggregated data and dissemination of knowledge products.

58. **Ms. Marteles** (Spain) said that her country was a party to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which provided a comprehensive response to the various forms of gender violence, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, sexual assault, trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and cyberbullying. The 2013-2016 National Strategy for the Eradication of Violence against Women prioritized those issues and the second comprehensive plan for combating trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation was currently in force.

59. A number of measures had been adopted as part of a holistic response to violence against women. The State Observatory on Violence against Women was established to collect, analyse and disseminate relevant information. The principle of promoting equal rights and opportunities and effective equality for men and women had been incorporated into the educational system along with steps to prevent gender-based violence. A broad-based support and protection system had been put in place for the victims of violence and their children. Victim Assistance Offices had been set up: much more than advisory bodies, they also guaranteed personalized treatment and sought to ensure that women and children were not further victimized during the legal process.

60. On 23 September, as leader of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, Spain had participated in the launch of the global network of focal points for promoting gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention, management and resolution. The second National Action Plan was being completed in order to incorporate civil society. Spain pledged to continue working to promote women's participation and leadership, as well as gender parity, not only on the domestic front but also through cooperation with multilateral mechanisms.

61. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that Sierra Leone had developed a National Action Plan to comply with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and would continue to uphold the relevant protocols relating to women's empowerment and to take part in the Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign. A number of relevant laws had been enacted and the National Action Plan and the Referral Protocol on Gender-based Violence would be implemented. As judges in the Supreme Court and the High Court, women were having an impact on the interpretation of the country's laws, while, as leaders of the newly established legal aid board, they were at the forefront of efforts to ensure that marginalized persons had access to justice.

62. The outbreak of the Ebola virus had taken a toll on the country's programmes but his Government was determined to meet the challenges. Under the Post-Ebola Programme, mainstreaming gender into the programme's six priority sectors was critical for success. Priority was being given to providing free care for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five. Another challenge being addressed was that of reducing adolescent pregnancies. His delegation looked forward to sustained cooperation and partnerships in mobilizing the resources required for success at all levels.

63. Renewed commitment to the issue of the empowerment of women was needed and the importance of developing and driving solutions to expand women's opportunities in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals could not be overstated. He drew inspiration from the fact that the centrality of gender issues was changing mentalities, inspiring actions and changing lives in all countries. The international community should continue to put gender at the heart of its quest for a better world.

64. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that women's empowerment had been placed at the heart of the development agenda in Bangladesh. In recognition of her role in promoting the advancement of women, his Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, had recently been declared Planet 50-50 Champion by UN-Women and had been granted the Agent of Change Award by the Global Partnership Forum. Gender parity had been

attained in primary and secondary school enrolment in Bangladesh and girls benefited from free education up to grade 12. Women's participation in the workforce had jumped from 7 per cent in 2000 to over 36 per cent currently. Of the 350 parliamentary seats, 50 were reserved for women and the posts of Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Speaker of the House and Deputy Leader of the House were all held by women.

65. Migrants, especially undocumented women and girls, were exposed to a heightened risk of human rights violations. Thus, migration was intrinsically linked to women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls. Institutional mechanisms, legal frameworks and financing must be strengthened in order to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women.

66. **Ms. Horbachova** (Ukraine) said that in 2015, her country had adopted a national human rights strategy focused not only on ensuring equal rights but also on combating gender-based violence, human trafficking and slavery, as well as domestic violence. Launched in 2016 to coordinate implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the first National Action Plan sought to eliminate cultural barriers to the full participation of women in negotiations and to work towards resolution of conflicts, peace and security at the national level.

67. The climate of physical insecurity caused by the external aggression being experienced in Ukraine had serious impacts on women. The occupation of Crimea and continuing aggression in Donbas by the Russian Federation had resulted in the internal displacement of approximately 1.8 million persons, the vast majority of whom were women. Women volunteers had mobilized in support of the military of Ukraine and were active on the frontlines, providing medical and logistical support. The knowledge, skills and experience of Ukrainian women would be vital in reaching a solution to the current crisis in and around her country. Her Government was committed to integrating the global obligations of the women, peace and security agenda into the country's domestic policies and laws and to increasing women's participation and leadership in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction.

68. **Mr. Wu** Haitao (China) said that the international community must seize the opportunity of the Sustainable Development Goals and effectively implement the commitments adopted in September 2015 at the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which China had co-hosted with UN-Women. All parties were expected to continue to implement vigorously their commitments relating to the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

69. Affected by weak global economic growth, developing countries were facing difficulties in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and would need further support. He urged developed countries to provide those countries with technology and funding and assist them in reducing poverty among women, improving opportunities for their employment and education and enabling them to become beneficiaries and drivers of human development and progress.

70. China was gradually implementing its pledge of $10 million to UN-Women to promote fulfilment of gender-related instruments, including the 2030 Agenda and the Goals. Other cooperation programmes were under way and China would continue to help other developing countries within the framework of South-South Cooperation.

71. As chair of the Group of Twenty, China had presided over the 2016 Women 20 (W20) Meeting, which had adopted a consensus that identified gender inclusiveness and equality as essential for strong, sustainable and balanced growth.

72. The legal system in China made ample provision for safeguarding women's rights and personal safety. His Government was launching vigorous campaigns to strengthen skills training for women and lift poor women out of poverty. China had adopted vigorous measures to improve women's health, and average life expectancy for women now stood at 77.37 years, exceeding the national average of 74.83 years.

73. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that his country placed emphasis on the National Gender Policy, the action plan for implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the national strategy to combat gender-based violence. Under the Constitution, women in Burundi enjoyed the right to hold public office at all levels. Rural women benefited from a microcredit, income-generating guarantee fund. The

Sexual Violence Act had been adopted as well as legislation to enforce stiffer penalties for perpetrators.

74. Free primary education had succeeded in raising the level of parity between girls and boys; improved health care during childbirth and for children under the age of five had significantly reduced the rate of infant mortality. As a step towards gender equality in employment, women were allowed to join the armed forces and the police. Burundi remained committed to building on its achievements in promoting gender equality and autonomy for women and girls. Regrettably, however, the unjust unilateral sanctions imposed on Burundi by certain partners were having negative repercussions on the population, in particular on women and girls.

75. **Mr. Taula** (New Zealand) said that within the framework of his country's National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, his Government was taking practical steps to increase the participation and leadership of women and ensure their representation at all levels of decision-making in conflict resolution processes.

76. In its eighth report under the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, New Zealand had drawn attention to the significant progress it had achieved in upholding women's civil, political and economic rights. The reporting and examination process was an opportunity to identify areas for improvement. Thus, his Government had decided to prioritize education and training for women and girls; women's skills and the economy; women's leadership; and ensuring that women and girls were free from violence.

77. As part of its effort to prevent domestic violence both nationally and in the Pacific region, the Government of New Zealand had proposed an overhaul of its family violence legislation. Earlier and more effective interventions were recommended in order to keep victims safe and change perpetrator behaviour. He urged all States to intensify efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls.

78. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that, since its independence, Algeria had been committed to reinforcing the principle of gender equality in its constitutions. It had acceded to all human rights conventions, had adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, and would be reconsidering its reservations to certain provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

79. Progress had been made in national legislation, including new procedures to ensure that the Criminal Code protected women against violence. A constitutional amendment in March 2016 had given women a special status, including equal access to high-ranking Government positions. It was a continuation of the gains made by the new constitution of 2008, which had resulted in an increase in the representation of women in the People's Assembly to 31.6 per cent.

80. All sectors of society must be included in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Government attached great importance to the involvement of women in national development, including through the creation of microenterprises and income-generating activities. Women's associations had served as effective partners in those programmes. Algeria would continue to cooperate with the United Nations and other stakeholders to achieve the targets set under the 2030 Agenda.

81. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica) said that his delegation welcomed the progress made in reducing violence against women and improving women's participation in economic life and decision-making, among other areas. However, structural inequalities continued to leave women at a distinct disadvantage relative to their male counterparts. Women were still responsible for the majority of unpaid care work and faced a persistent gender pay gap; they had limited opportunities for political leadership; and the risk of violence remained far too high. The commitment to eliminate violence against women and girls was not new, and as States set about their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, they must redouble their efforts to translate words into meaningful action.

82. The Bureau of Gender Affairs in Jamaica had been working to strengthen gender mainstreaming policies and address gender-based violence. The national strategic action plan to eliminate gender-based violence 2016-2026 would be implemented in October 2016; a national shelter strategy was being developed; and consultations were under way on an anti-sexual

harassment bill. Jamaica had also ratified the ILO Domestic Workers Convention in September 2016. Trafficking of women and girls was a serious human rights violation that was exacerbated by conflict and humanitarian emergencies, and Jamaica supported efforts to prevent and combat it and support the victims.

83. In order to engage men and boys in its efforts to combat discrimination and violence and support the advancement of women, Jamaica had launched a national HeForShe campaign in July 2016, which was being championed by high-profile Jamaican celebrities such as Usain Bolt. The Prime Minster had also recently joined the Secretary-General of the United Nations in declaring himself to be a feminist.

84. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his country had continued to take legal and practical steps to enable women to fully exercise their rights. Under the leadership of Kim Jong Un, women were playing an active role in State activities and were making great contributions to social development.

85. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea worked in close cooperation with international organizations to protect the rights of women. It had fulfilled its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since its accession and had withdrawn its reservations to the Convention in November 2015. It had submitted the combined second, third and fourth periodic reports on its implementation of the Convention to the treaty body in April 2016, which was a manifestation of its willingness to respect the fundamental principles of the Convention and to fulfil its obligations as a State party.

86. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea wished to take issue once again with the attitude of Japan attempting to cover up its past crimes such as the use of "comfort women" by the Japanese Army. During its occupation of Korea, Japan had forced more than 200,000 Korean women and girls to serve as sex slaves, exposing them to great pain and suffering. Although many countries were demanding that Japan should apologize and make compensation for its crimes against humanity, Japan continued to deny what it had done.

87. Furthermore, Japan had insulted former "comfort women" by referring to them as victims of human trafficking and was thwarting their registration in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Memory of the World programme. No statute of limitations was applicable to crimes against humanity. In view of its serious approach to the sexual violence committed by its peacekeepers, the United Nations should insist that Japan should make a sincere apology and provide due compensation for the crime of sexual slavery committed by its Imperial Army.

88. His delegation also wished to report that the authorities of the Republic of Korea had abducted women from his country and had refused to provide information on their fate or allow them to be repatriated. It was a crime against humanity and the United Nations should take the necessary measures to ensure those women returned to their families as soon as possible. The way the organization and international human rights mechanisms chose to respond would be a reflection of their approach to human rights protection.

89. **Ms. al-Jaber** (Bahrain) said that her country was convinced that women could make a significant contribution to its efforts to spur development, and was therefore taking determined action to empower women to participate fully in Bahrain's advancement. Women had long played a key role in her country's social and cultural spheres. A formal education system for Bahraini women had been established in 1929 and women now comprised approximately 60 per cent of students in higher education. In 2005, the Supreme Council for Women had launched a national strategy for women that involved all relevant governmental bodies and civil society organizations with a view to promoting women's advancement. The Supreme Council also oversaw a $100 million fund that provided financial support to small- and medium-sized enterprises run by women, and Bahrain had also launched programmes to promote the economic empowerment of women and increase their participation in the labour market. Women had comprised a mere 4.9 per cent of the country's workforce in 1971 but that figure had risen to 33 per cent by 2014. Women also held 51 per cent of public sector jobs.

90. Bahrain had been one of the first countries of the region to grant women the rights to vote and to stand for election. Women had played a pivotal role in the drafting of the country's National Action Charter and Bahrain, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, had launched a comprehensive programme under the slogan "Together we can build the nation" to promote women's participation in politics. Women had won six parliamentary and municipal council seats in 2014 and a number of Bahraini women had been elected to senior positions on the world stage, including Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, who had been elected President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. According to a report issued by the International Labour Organization in 2016, Bahrain was the country in which the number of business enterprises run by women was increasing most rapidly. Bahrain was committed to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda, particularly Goal 5, and had incorporated the Goals into its Government Action Plan for the period 2015 to 2018. Bahrain had also acceded to and complied with its obligations pursuant to numerous international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

91. **Mr. Daunivalu** (Fiji) said that discrimination on the basis of gender was prohibited under the constitution of Fiji. Illustrating the effectiveness of its national gender mainstreaming policy, the country had an unprecedented number of women parliamentarians and a woman speaker of parliament for the first time, while two women were responsible for judicial appointments in the Judicial Services Commission. More women were graduating from university than ever before, and girls were benefiting from the free education policy.

92. A number of laws had been passed to address sexual and gender-based violence, which had included a requirement that police officers and other professionals report child abuse. However, new legislation had to be accompanied by a shift in attitudes, which Fiji had endeavoured to achieve by mainstreaming gender in its institutions and policies. Its activities in that regard had included working with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to bring a gender perspective into the national parliament; incorporating a gender perspective into the framework for disaster preparedness and response; and running mandatory annual training on sexual and gender-based violence for the judiciary.

93. The achievement of equality between men and women would help build a stronger nation and would lead to social and economic progress. Educating children and young people was a fundamental aspect of creating an equal society, and sharing the responsibilities of the home equally would allow men and women to share the responsibilities of employment.

94. **Mr. Otto** (Palau) said that his country was both a matrilineal and a matriarchal society; women played an important role in managing family and community affairs. The Mechesil Belau, a national women's conference that took place every year, had the authority to regulate customary activities without referral to a higher legislative body, and its scope had expanded to include many aspects of sustainable development. It had, for example, been responsible for shortening the period for funerals to reduce the burden on families and the community, and for improving food hygiene during the observance of such customs.

95. Drawing on its traditional status and its numbers, the women's conference (Mechesil Belau) also advocated for legislative change. It was credited with measures such as prohibiting prostitution, instituting the mandatory reporting of child abuse and implementing stiffer penalties for drug offences. Through the Mechesil Belau, women had been able to preserve the best and improve the rest, thereby making Palau fit for purpose as it strove to set specific targets for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5.

96. **Ms. Deer** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that the impact of armed conflict on women could be severe and women faced systematic disadvantages. ICRC was often present in places where few other humanitarian organizations were operating and its mandate to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict allowed it unique access, including to places of detention. Women often had to cope alone as heads of household, and those whose husbands were missing frequently had no clear status under national law, which affected their access to property or guardianship of children. In addition, the usual mechanisms against violence were often

weakened in times of armed conflict, which left women and girls exposed to sexual violence.

97. Women and girls must be actively involved in decisions regarding their needs and ICRC consulted them when designing programmes, which might build on their existing coping strategies or provide them with alternatives. Such programmes included developing income-generating activities that reduced the need to send a child out to work or resort to prostitution, and helping women who wished to fetch water in groups to reduce the risk of violence by establishing timetables for doing so.

98. Lastly, ICRC reminded States of their primary obligation to meet the needs of the population under their control. It urged all States to ensure a safe environment for women and girls and minimize the harm to which they were exposed by respecting and ensuring respect for the relevant international norms and standards, in particular international humanitarian law.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

99. **Mr. Joshi** (India) said that it was ironic that a country that regulated the functioning of women in its society through medieval draconian laws was making claims about the rights of women in a pluralistic democracy such as India. Pakistan would be well served to seriously examine what ailed its women and hampered their advancement. His Government completely rejected the baseless allegations made by Pakistan about women in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir; in fact, innocent women living there had long suffered as a result of the persistent terrorist attacks perpetrated by proxies of Pakistan. His delegation was well aware of the cynical attempts by Pakistan to pursue the diplomacy of hate through lies and deceit and did not intend to respond further to such misguided and futile efforts.

100. **Ms. Oh** Youngju (Republic of Korea) said that the accusation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was baseless and the human rights record of that country spoke for itself. Despite repeated warnings from the international community, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had continued to pour its scarce resources into launching ballistic missiles and conducting nuclear tests in order to maintain its grip on power, while neglecting its dire human rights situation, which had been thoroughly and vividly described in the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

101. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that no amount of obfuscation could hide the grave, systematic and well documented human rights violations taking place in the Indian-occupied State of Jammu and Kashmir. The pellet bullets used by the occupying forces represented the most graphic manifestation of suppression, which was a travesty of justice, law and all that the civilized world stood for. The Indian atrocities had resulted in the deaths of over 90,000 innocent Kashmiris, including many women and children. The State of Jammu and Kashmir remained an internationally recognized dispute in accordance with Security Council resolutions 47 (1948), 51 (1948), 80 (1950), 91 (1951) and 122 (1957) and Pakistan rejected any insinuation that the legitimate struggle of the Kashmiri people was equivalent to terrorism as nothing more than an attempt by India to deflect attention from that struggle. Pakistan believed that the dispute needed to be settled in accordance with the Security Council resolutions in order to achieve a lasting peace in South Asia and stood ready to engage in comprehensive and meaningful dialogue with India.

102. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that South Korea was not qualified to argue about human rights in other countries; the purpose of the current meeting was to discuss women's human rights. Based on the report of the Human Rights Council of June 2016, the human rights situation in South Korea was dismal. The National Security Act had led to harsh repression; the truth of the Sewol ferry disaster had yet to be established; and children were being abused. The abduction of female citizens from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in April 2016 had appalled the world and constituted a heinous terrorist act. The South Korean authorities had detained those women in isolation for seven months, provided no information on their fate and had subjected them to physical and mental abuse, including sexual torture. It was a flagrant violation of their human rights and core international human rights instruments. The South Korean Government should abolish its National Security Act, improve its miserable human rights situation and, in particular, return the women from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to their families without delay.

103. **Ms. Oh** Youngju (Republic of Korea) said that her delegation would not respond to the preposterous arguments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea but urged that Government to heed the requests of the international community on improving the human rights situation of its people and to comply with the relevant resolutions.

104. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his Government categorically rejected the politicized and nonsensical arguments made by South Korea, which were not relevant to the advancement of women. The abducted citizens were ordinary women who were being held in solitary confinement, tortured and allowed no contact with the outside world. His delegation requested an explanation from South Korea.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.